

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

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FM AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
TO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
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S E C R E T SECSTION 1 OF 2 JAKARTA 7842

EYES ONLY

BANGKOK FOR AMBASSADOR WITEHOUSE; STATE FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY
HOLBROOKE.

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, TH
SUBJECT: MEMCON BY ROBERT ZIMMERMAN, USAID INDONESIA, OF CONVERSATION
IN BANGKOK OF JUNE 6, 1977

1. FOLLOWING IS MEMCON PREPARED BY ROBERT ZIMMERMAN OF USAID
JAKARTA OF HIS CONVERSATION IN BANGKOK ON JUNE 6 WITH GENERAL
KRIANGSAK CHAMANAN AND LT. GENERAL SAIYUD KERDPHOL. SUBJECT
CONCERNED IS THAI POLITICAL PROCESS AND POSSIBLE CHANGES THEREIN.

2. "INTRODUCTION. THE CONVERSATION REPORTED HERE TOOK PLACE AT
THE SUGGESTION OF LT. GENERAL SAIYUD KERDPHOL DURING AN INFOMAL
DISCUSSION AT THIS RESIDENCE ON JUNE 5, 1977. AT THAT TIME GENERAL
SAIYUD AND I WERE PHILOSOPHIZING ABOUT THE POLITICAL PROCESS IN
THAILAND AND ITS POSSIBLE ADVERSE IMPACT ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF A
TRULY CREATIVE U.S./THAI RELATIONSHIP THAT WOULD NOT INVOLVE A
U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE IN THAILAND. GENERAL SAIYUD SAID THAT
PRIME MINISTER THANIN KRAIVICHIEH AND SEVERAL OTHER MEMBERS OF
THE PRIME MINISTER'S ADVISORY COUNCIL (PMAC) WERE OF THE IM-
PRESSION THAT THE CURRENT TIGHTLY CONTROLLED POLITICAL PROCESS
AND ACTIONS WERE PRECISELY WHAT THE UNITED STATES WANTED TO SEE

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IN THAILAND. SAIYUD FELT THAT I SHOULD TALK PRIVATELY TO GENERAL
KRIANGSAK CHAMANAN OF THE PMAC. HE REQUEST THAT I JUST SIT
TIGHT AND SEE IF SUCH A MEETING COULD BE ARRANGED. AT 5:00 P.M.
ON JUNE 6, 1977, SAIYUD INFORMED ME THAT THE MEETING WAS SET FOR
8:00 P.M. AT THE LA VIENDOMME RESTAURANT. HE ADKED ME TO COME
ALONE AND NOT MENTION THE MEETING TO ANYBODY. GENERAL KRIANGSAK
LATER ASKED THAT I NOT PREPARE A MEMCON ON OUR MEETING. HE WANTED

NOTHING ON THE RECORD. HE SAID HE WAS WILLING TO MEET WITH ME BECAUSE GENERAL SAIYUD HAD ASSURED HIM I WAS IN THAILAND AT MY OWN EXPENSE, ON MY OWN TIME AND WAS A FRIEND WHO WANTED TO HELP. I TOLD KRIANGSAK THAT I WAS PREPARING MY OWN THOUGHTS ON U.S. POLICY TOWARD THAILAND AND THAT I INTENDED TO PASS THEM TO ASSISTANT SECRETARY HOLBROOKE. I AM SURE KRIANGSAK SAW AN OPPORTUNITY TO USE ME AS A DIRECT CONDUIT TO AT LEAST PASS SOME OF HIS THOUGHTS TO WASHINGTON.

2. "1. THE TAHI POLITICAL PROCESS. THE HEART OF OUR THREE-HOUR DISCUSSION WAS THE CURRENT POLITICAL SITUATION IN HAILAND AND HOW IT MIGHT BE ALTERED TO MAKE IT MORE RESPONSIVE AND CREATE A WIDER BASE OF SUPPORT. KIRANGSAK SAID AT THE OUTSET THAT HE HIMSELF COULD MAKE NO CHANGES. HE DOWN-PLAYED THE IMPRESSION THAT HE IS THE REAL POWER BEHIND THE SCENE. BUT HE DID ADMIT THAT HE MIGHT BE ABLE TO PERSUADE OTHER MEMBERS OF THE PMAC TO DO CERTAIN THINGS. WE THEN PROCEEDED TO A DISCUSSION OF SPECIFIC POSSIBLE ACTIONS. THESE ACTIONS, INCLUDING POSSIBLE U.S. RESPONSES, ARE LISTED IN A SEPARATE PAPER ON U.S. POLICY TOWARD THAILAND THAT I HAVE PREPARED ON THE BASIS OF MY DISCUSSION IN THAILAND (TO BE FORWARDED BY LETTER).

"(A) AMNESTY FOR STUDENTS. KRIANGSAK SAID THAT HE WAS IN FAVOR OF A BLANKET AMNESTY FOR STUDENTS EXCEPT THOSE WHO MAY HAVE KILLED SOMEONE. IDEALLY THE KING SHOULD OFFER THE AMNESTY BUT HE IS CURRENTLY VERY DISILLUSIONED WITH THE STUDENTS. (COMMENT: ON THE WAY HOME GENERAL SAIYUD SAID THAT IT WOULD HAVE BEEN USEFUL FOR ME TO TALK TO COL. WASIT, THE KING'S AIDE DE CAMP, WHO MIGHT THEN BE ABLE TO PERSUADE THE KING TO SUPPORT THE AMNESTY AND OTHER POLITICAL CHANGES DISCUSSED DURING THE EVENING. MORE TIME WOULD HAVE BEEN NEEDED, HOWEVER, THAN I COULD AFFORD.)

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"(B) FORMATION OF PRESSURE/INTEREST GROUPS. KRIANGSAK SEEMED INTERESTED IN THIS POSSIBILITY, PARTICULARLY THE SUGGESTION THAT THEY BE GIVEN WEEKLY ACCESS TO THE PRIME MINISTER AND HIS CABINET AS A SUBSTITUTE FOR STREET DEMONSTRATIONS. HE SAID HE WOULD LIKE TO SEE THIS PROPOSAL WORKED OUT ON PAPER. (COMMENT: I LATER DISCUSSED THIS PROPOSAL IN GREAT DETAIL WITH GENERAL SAIYUD, INCLUDING THE POSSIBILITY OF OCCASIONAL TV APPEARANCES BY THE PRIME MINISTER WITH PARTICULAR INTEREST GROUPS RAISING QUESTIONS ON SPECIAL DEVELOPMENT PROBLEMS.)

"(C) LIFT PRESS CENSORSHIP. THIS SUGGESTION GENERATED NO GREAT ENTHUSIASM. IT WAS DIFFICULT TO TELL WHETHER KRIANGSAK WAS AGREEABLE OR NOT.

"(D) LIFT RESTRICTIONS ON TEACHING POLITICAL THEORY AND POLITICAL DISCUSSION IN THE UNIVERSITIES. KRIANGSAK RECOGNIZED THIS AS AN UNNECESSARILY SEVERE RESTRICTION. HE SEEMED TO SHARE MY CONCERN ABOUT THE EFFECT SUCH RESTRICTIONS MIGHT HAVE ON POLITICAL

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AND SOCIAL SCIENCE PROFESSORS WHOSE ENTIRE TRAINING AND PURPOSES IN LIFE WERE NOW DENIED ANY RELEVANCE IN THAILAND.

"(E) FIXED TERM FOR PRIME MINISTER. KRIANGSAK BELIEVED THAT THE VOTE OF NO CONFIDENCE IN THE PARLIAMENTARY PROCESS WAS TOO DESTABILIZING FOR THAILAND. HE AGREED THAT KUKRIT PRAMOJ, FOR EXAMPLE, WOULD HAVE BEEN MUCH MORE EFFECTIVE AS PRIME MINISTER HAD HE NOT HAD TO SPEND TIME MOLLIFYING SO MANY POLITICAL PARTIES. "(F) PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS AND THE 12-YEAR PROGRAM OF THE PMAC. KRIANGSAK SAID HE FAVORED ELECTIONS FOR PARLIAMENT IN TWO YEARS OF LESS. HE SAID THAT THE 12-YEAR PROGRAM FOR RESTORATION OF DEMOCRACY ANNOUNCED IN OCTOBER 1976 AFTER THE COUP WAS NOT IMMUTABLE. INDEED, HE SAID IT WAS REALLY MEANINGLESS AND COULD BE ACCELERATED OR REJECTED ANY TIME.

3. "2. DISCUSSIONS WITH ASSISTANT SECRETARY HOLBROOKE. GENERAL KRIANGSAK ASKED ME TO PUT THE IDEAS WE HAD BEEN DISCUSSING ON PAPER AND TO GIVE THEM TO HIM THROUGH GENERAL SAIYUD BEFORE I LEFT THAILAND

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HE SAID HE WANTED TO STUDY THEM IN MORE DETAIL AND TO MEET AS SOON AS POSSIBLE--'THE SOONER THE BETTER' WITH ASSISTANT SECRETARY HOLBROOKE. KRIANGSAK MENTIONED HIS MEETING WITH HOLBROOKE IN WASHINGTON AND SAID HE CAME AWAY WITH GREATER APPRECIATION OF THE SINCERITY OF THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION'S STAND ON HUMAN RIGHTS. KRIANGSAK WOULD PREFER TO HAVE HOLBROOKE COME TO THAILAND UNOFFICIALLY FOR SERIOUS DISCUSSIONS ON ALL THE ISSUES WE HAD DISCUSSED. AT LEAST HOLBROOKE SHOULD COME PREPARED TO SET ASIDE TWO DAYS FOR CANDID DISCUSSIONS. HE ADDED, 'BUT WE MUST BOTH UNDERSTAND THAT NEITHER SIDE IS COMMITTED TO ANY ACTION AT THIS TIME,' KRIANGSAK SAID MR. OAKLEY SHOULD COME ALONG. HE EVEN SAID HE WOULD LIKE TO TALK TO BREZNEV. KRIANGSAK WANTED MINIMAL PARTICIPATION BY THE EMBASSY IN THE ENTIRE VISIT AND DISCUSSIONS. I TOLD HIM THIS MIGHT BE DIFFICULT AND NOT PRACTICAL IN ANY CASE. KRIANGSAK SAID, HOWEVER, THAT HE WANTED COMPLETE SECRECY. HE EVEN ASKED ME NOT TO WRITE A MEMCON ON OUR CONVERSATION OR TO INFORM THE U.S. EMBASSY OF MY DISCUSSIONS WITH HIM. (COMMENT: THIS REQUEST HAS CAUSED ME CONSIDERABLE STRESS. I BELIEVE KRIANGSAK'S FEARS ABOUT LEAKS AND THE DAMAGE THEY COULD DO TO ANY POSSIBILITY FOR A CANDID DISCUSSION ON THE THAI POLITICAL PROCESS AND POSSIBLE CHANGES THEREAFTER ARE UNDERSTANDABLE AND JUSTIFIED. I TOLD HIM I WOULD NOT DO WHAT I AM NOW DOING. IF HE BELIEVES THAT I HAVE LIED TO HIM THIS ENTIRE EFFORT WILL BE USELESS.)

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S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 JAKARTA 7842

EYES ONLY

BANGKOK FOR AMBASSADOR WHITEHOUSE; STATE FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY
HOLBROOKE

4. "3. AT LEAST UNDERSTAND US. I PROCEEDED TO OUTLINE THE TYPES
OF THINGS THE UNITED STATES MIGHT UNDERTAKE IN RESPONSE TO ACTIONS
BY THE TAI GOVERNMENT IN THE AREAS OUTLINED ABOVE (AND OTHERS IN
THE PAPER BEING FORWARDED BY LETTER). I ADDED THAT IT WAS MY
PERSONAL OPINION THAT THE UNITED STATES WAS COMMITTING ITSELF
TO SUCH DEEDS THROUGH SPEECHES LIKE THOSE OF SECRETARY VANCE
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA AND AMBASSADOR WHITEHOUSE AT THE
FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS CLUB OF THAILAND ON JUNE 3, 1977.

5. "KRIANGSAK SAID THAT 'WORDS ARE EASY, DEEDS ARE ANOTHER MATTER.'
HE WAS NOT VERY CONVINCED THAT THE UNITED STATES WOULD REALLY BE
VERY HELPFUL OR INTERESTED. HE SAID, 'WHETHER YOU HELP US OR NOT
IS UP TO YOU. HELP OR DON'T HELP, BUT AT LEAST UNDERSTAND US.
YOU AMERICANS TEND TO FORGET YOUR FRIENDS TOO EASILY. ALL WE CAN
HOPE FOR IS THAT YOU WILL TRY TO UNDERSTAND US AND OUR PROBLEMS.'
KRIANGSAK REFERRED TO HIS SPEECH AT THE JOINT EUROPEAN CHAMBERS
OF COMMERCE IN BANGKOK ON APRIL 19. HE REITERATED THAT HIS
CRITICISMS WERE MEANT TO BE CONSTRUCTIVE.

6. "4. LT. GENERAL SAIYUD. AS WE SAT DOWN AT THE DINNER TABLE
KRIANGSAK GESTURED TOWARD SAIYUD AND SAID, 'HE WILL BE MY NEXT
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CHIEF OF STAFF.' I SLIPPED. I DID NOT PURSUE THIS OPENING AND
I AM NOT SURE WHETHER HE MEANT CHIEF OF STAFF OF THE RTAF OR A
PERSONAL CHIEF OF STAFF FOR KRIANGSAK. IT WAS CLEAR, HOWEVER,
THAT KRIANGSAK AND SAIYUD WERE FRIENDS.

7. "SAIYUD IS DEFINITELY A LIBERAL GENERAL. HE TOLD ME ON SEVERAL
DIFFERENT TIMES ON SUNDAY (JUNE 5), MONDAY (JUNE 6), AND TUESDAY

(JUNE 7), WHEN I PASSED A ROUGH DRAFT OF MY PAPER TO HIM THAT WHILE HE FULLY SUPPORTED ALL OF THE IDEAS WE DISCUSSED, AND BELIEVED THE CURRENT POLITICAL PROCESS WAS JUST GENERATING FRUSTRATION, HE SAW LITTLE HOPE OF ANY CHANGES UNLESS P.M. THANIN WAS REMOVED. THANIN IS HONEST BUT HE IS TOO NARROW AND UNCOMPROMISING. HE EVEN BELIEVES SAIYUD IS A LEFTIST. SAIYUD SAID THAT REMOVING THANIN WOULD NOT BE EASY. HE SAID MANY PMAC MEMBERS FEARED SUCH A CHANGE WOULD HAVE A BAD EFFECT ON FOREIGN INVESTMENT BECAUSE IT WOULD APPEAR DESTABILIZING.

8. "SAIYUD SAID THE RTAF SHOULD ADOPT A POSTURE SIMILAR TO THAT OF THE INDIAN ARMY AND BE A FORCE FOR STABILITY BEHIND THE SCENES. IT SHOULD NOT DIRECTLY PARTICIPATE IN POLITICS AND ITS LEADERS SHOULD CHANGE THEIR IMAGE AS A POLITICAL PARTY AND BECOME TRUE PROFESSIONALS. HE FELT THE TIME HAD COME FOR THE PMAC TO ANNOUNCE NEW ELECTIONS AND THEN TURN THE GOVERNMENT ENTIRELY OVER TO THE CIVILIANS WITH THE PROVISION, 'IF THEY MAKE MISTAKES AGAIN THAT CREATE DISORDER WE (THE RTAF) WILL BE BACK.'

9. "SAIYUD BELIEVES THAT THE CURRENT GOVERNMENT WILL NOT BE ABLE TO COPE WITH THE INSURGENCY OVER THE LONG RUN. 'IT DOES NOT UNDERSTAND POLITICAL WAR.' HE WAS ALSO WORRIED ABOUT THE TYPES OF ATTACKS THE COMMUNISTS WILL COORDINATE IN THE INTERNATIONAL SCENE. 'WE ARE VULNERABLE TO THE SAME KIND OF PUBLIC ATTACKS THE LON NOL AND THIEU GOVERNMENTS SUFFERED.'

10. "COMMENTS. KRIANGSAK SEEMS TO BE PREPARING TO TRY SOME CHANGE IN THE CURRENT POLITICAL PROCESS. I AM SURE HE WANTS TO BE NUMBER ONE AT LEAST BEHIND THE SCENES SOMEWHAT SIMILAR TO KRIT SIWARA
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THOUGH HE HAS FEW OF THE SOURCES OF POWER KRIT HAD. HE MAY BELIEVE HE CAN STRENGTHEN HIS POSITION IF HE CAN DEMONSTRATE A CAPACITY TO GET CLOSER RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES AND MORE SUPPORT THEREFROM. I AM UNDER NO ILLUSIONS THAT ALL OF KRIANGSAK'S MOTIVES ARE NOBLE. I BELIEVE, HOWEVER, THAT HE IS PREPARED TO TRY TO ENCOURAGE A FREER POLITICAL PROCESS IF HE CAN GET SIGNIFICANT U.S. SUPPORT THEREFOR.

11. "I ALSO BELIEVE THAT WE SHOULD MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO ENGAGE IN CANDID DISCUSSION OF THE NATURE SUGGESTED IN THIS MEMORANDUM AND, INITIALLY AT LEAST, WE SHOULD DO SO IN THE MANNER PROPOSED BY KRIANGSAK - I.E. BEGIN WITH A VISIT BY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE RICHARD HOLBROOKE. SUCH A VISIT SHOULD COME AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. KRINAGSAK COULD BE REPLACED ANY TIME. OR, HE COULD END UP ON TOP AND IF WE HAVE ALREADY APPEARED TRULY INTERESTED IN ACTING ON OUR EXPRESSED CONCERNS OF THE PAST WE WILL LIKELY HAVE GREATER INFLUENCE THAN OTHERWISE.

12. "FINALLY, I HAVE PREPARED THIS MEMCON WITH GREAT RELUCTANCE.

I AM TORN BETWEEN MY OBLIGATIONS AS A U.S. FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICER,
MY PROMISE TO RESPECT KRIANGSAK'S EXPRESS DESIRE TO KEEP OUR
MEETING OFF EVEN SECRET RECORDS, AND THE FEAR THAT IF THIS MEMCON BEC
OMES
PUBLIC IT COULD KILL ALL HOPES WE MAY HAVE OF CONTRIBUTING
THE THE CREATION OF A MORE RESPONSIVE AND REPRESENTATIVE POLITICAL
PROCESS IN THAILAND. WE HAVE NOTHING TO LOSE IN MEETING WITH
KRIANGSAK FOR FRANK DISCUSSIONS ON THE THAI POLITICAL PROCESS,
ITS RELATIONSHIP TO THAILAND'S FUTURE CAPACITY TO PLAY A TRULY
CREATIVE ROLE IN ASEAN, TO MAINTAINING A STABLE BALANCE BETWEEN
COMMUNIST AND NON-COMMUNIST STATES IN SEA AND TO POSSIBLE U.S.
POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, MILITARY AND DIPLOMATIC SUPPORT THEREFOR.
THAILAND SHOULD BE VIEWED AS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR CREATIVE
DIPLOMACY - NOT A BACKWATER VESTIGE ON THE SEA MAINLAND."
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